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THE WORD PREACHED BY THE
CHRISTIAN MINISTRY. 3

A
S E R M O N,

DELIVERED IN THE
PARISH - CHURCHES
OF
MEPAL AND SUTTON,

IN THE
DIOCESE AND ISLE OF ELY,
On SUNDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1781.

By GEORGE GASKIN, M.A.
RECTOR OF MEPAL cum SUTTON;

AND
LECTURER of ST. MARY, ISLINGTON, MIDDLESEX.

L O N D O N :

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TO MY BELOVED
PARISHIONERS,
THE INHABITANTS OF
MEPAL AND SUTTON,
IN THE
DIOCESE AND ISLE OF ELY;
THE FOLLOWING
SERMON,

(Delivered in their Churches as an Introductory Discourse)

Is now dedicated,

And recommended to their serious, attentive Perusal,

By their faithful, and affectionate PASTOR,

ISLINGTON,
Jan. 31st, 1782.

GEORGE GASKIN.



2 TIM. iv. 2.

P REACH THE WORD:—

MY BRETHREN,

BY the unsolicited and unlooked-for favor of the reverend the Dean and Chapter of Ely *, I am appointed, as you perceive, your Rector; and give me leave to assure you, that, in proportion to the abilities God hath given me, and the opportunities I shall find, I am extremely desirous of becoming instrumental to your spiritual welfare.

The task of superintending souls, and rightfully dispensing God's holy Word and Sacraments, distributing to each their portion in due season, although very honourable, is at once arduous and awful;

* Particularly the Rev. George Downing, M. A. one of the Prebendaries.

and we may say, with the Apostle †, “ Who is sufficient for these things?”— But however arduous and awful may be the task, how insufficient soever frail fallen Creatures may be thereto, and although I sensibly feel my own personal defects and frailties, whereby I am less equal to the task than multitudes of my younger, as well as elder Brethren, yet do I take comfort in those gracious chearing promises made for our encouragement in God’s word, that his * “ grace is sufficient for “ us,” that ‖ “ his strength will make “ perfect the weakness of those, who be- “ come humble suppliants for it;” and that Christ is with his faithful Ministers, and will be with them, aiding, supporting, strengthening them ‡ “ always, even unto “ the end of the world.”

With these views and encouragements, my dear Brethren, I this day, in the presence of God and his Angels, deliberately and solemnly enter upon the pastoral office amongst you.

In conformity to the cautious injunctions of our ecclesiastical constitution, I

† 2 Cor. ii. 16.

‖ 2 Cor. xii. 9.

* 2 Cor. xii. 9.

‡ Matt. xxviii. 20.

have,

have, in your presence, declared my assent and consent to the liturgical forms of our Church; I have made declaration, that in conducting the publick worship of God, my own practice shall be guided by them; I have read to you the certificate of my having subscribed to this declaration, in the presence of our right reverend Bishop; and I have also read the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, maintained and taught in the Church of England, with a declaration of my unfeigned assent and consent thereto:—And, believe me, I have done all this, not merely in compliance with the letter of the Law, but in full conviction, that the various offices of our Church are the best and most perfect forms of any I know of in Christendom; and that our articles of religion are a system of pure evangelical truths, and admirably calculated for the general subscription of an orthodox Clergy, as admitting a * diversity of opinion in some non-essential points of speculative Divinity.—Hence you may collect, that I am a hearty and zealous friend to our excellent Church-Establishment; that I love her Liturgy; that I believe her Doctrines; and that my ministerial practice

* Vide Bp. Burnet, on the 17th Article.

and preaching amongst you, are intended to be in exact conformity thereto,

Some of you may probably be here desirous to offer a question, and ask me, whether, in order the more effectually to put these good designs into execution, I mean to be constantly resident amongst you? — In reply whereto, I answer, that however zealous on your behalf, I cannot give you a constant personal residence. — The providence of GOD led me into another station, very soon after my entrance into the holy ministry. My charge *there* is amongst a very numerous people; and my family connexions are in the same place. It cannot, therefore, reasonably be expected that I should quit that station, and take up my intire residence here. — But, my Brethren, do not immediately conclude I mean to neglect *you*: that be far from me. — It is my intention, as long as the Almighty is pleased to afford me health and strength, to devote some, and no inconsiderable portion of every year, to the personal discharge of my duty, in these parishes; and the remainder of the time will be, edifyingly I hope, filled up by my reverend Brother, whom I have found Curate. This circumstance,

cumstance, I trust, will not give you any uneasiness, and I am sure will not, if you only recollect, and believe, that “*neither
 “is he that planteth any thing, neither
 “he that watereth, but G O D, that giveth
 “the increase.” To come to church merely because this or that man preaches, is to come on a very unworthy motive. You are to attend the sanctuary, because you are members of one mystical body, of which Christ is the head; because you owe duty to G O D, and because by “the
 “means of grace,” you wish to attain to
 “the hope of glory;” in short, because you desire to save your souls.—And if these be your motives, as they ought to be, you’ll not return without being edified, let who will be the Minister officiating.

Before I proceed to speak to the Text, I have only one thing more to say, and that is, that I very much covet your esteem and your love; not because I have any apprehensions it can contribute to my *temporal interest*, but on another, and very different account.—The tythes, the glebe, and the stated offerings, are the only

* 1 Cor. iii. 7.

sources of my income in these parishes, and they were settled on *the Incumbent* long before any of us, or our forefathers, were born.—The law gives me the same claim thereto, as it does your respective Landlords to a rent for the premises which you hold of them.—My due, therefore, *I must have*, and you are to give it me, not as a benevolence, but as my legal and equitable claim; designedly to keep back any part whereof, would be robbery and sacrilege, and, you all know, easily recoverable by the laws of the land.—When I ask, therefore, your esteem and your love, it cannot be on the account of temporal advantage, but for another reason, viz. because if you love me, I shall have much greater reason to hope, that my ministerial labours will be attended with a greater blessing, and more abundant success. They, towards whom there is an affectionate partiality, will always be heard with candour; their words will be attended to with open ears; and whatever they say, will be sure to carry with it weight and importance. The Christian Minister, therefore, who is earnestly desirous to benefit those over whom he is placed, cannot but fervently wish to conciliate their good opinion. He is con-

vinced

vinced of the infinite importance of the errand on which he is sent; he knows the value of souls, and is solicitous to take advantage of every means, duty and religious prudence can suggest, whereby to render his “* labours of love” effectual to the turning men “† from darkness to “light, and from the power of Satan unto “G O D.”—And, my Brethren, till you find just grounds whereon to form a different opinion, do me the justice to believe, that I am verily and indeed interested in your spiritual welfare; — that I much wish to be the instrument of conducting you safely through the wilderness of this world to the heavenly Canaan; where, and where only, uninterrupted peace, and never-failing joys, are to be found. If you can suffer yourselves to believe that such are my earnest wishes, and that to accomplish them my endeavours are bent, you surely will be prepossessed in my favour; and, with this advantage, I shall not despair of being, through the Divine Blessing, useful to you in the course of my Ministry.

But, lest I should seem to forget the sentence of Scripture, with which I intro-

* 1 Thess. i. 3.

† Acts xxvi. 18.

duced my discourse, let us now turn our thoughts immediately thereto.

St. Paul, ever zealous in the cause of Christ, not only preaches, but also writes for the edification of the Church; and having been the instrument of converting Timothy to the faith, and placed him at Ephesus, to exercise the pastoral office, he transmits to him two Epistles, the chief design of which, seems to have been that of stirring him up faithfully to discharge the various duties of his Ministry. In each of them, he enumerates those duties particularly. The compass of a sermon, will not afford me room to enlarge upon all. I have therefore selected one duty, which St. Paul gives Timothy in charge; and on that, I will endeavour to remark some few things, that may be interesting and beneficial to us all; whence also you will see, what you ought to look for, and what, I trust, you will always find, in my discourses from this sacred place.

The great Apostle says to his son Timothy, and by the Epistle being perpetuated in the Church, we may suppose him saying to every Minister of the Gospel,—*preach the Word.* And he gives it
in

in awful solemn charge—" I charge thee,
 " therefore, before God, (he says,) and the
 " Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the
 " quick and the dead, at his appearing,
 " and his kingdom; **PREACH THE WORD:**"

—Now, my Brethren, there is one point of doctrine fairly deducible from these words; and that is this,—*there are some appointed in the Church of Christ, to preach the Word.*—Let us then propose, and resolve some queries on this topic: And let the first be—Who are appointed?—The second—What Word are they to preach?—And the third—What is it to preach the Word?

Our first enquiry is, Who are appointed to preach the Word?

The primitive preachers in the Church of Christ, were the *Apostles*, selected and commissioned to the discharge of this work, immediately by our blessed Lord himself; who, travelling into various regions of the earth, propagated the knowledge of their Master, and the method of obtaining salvation through him, far and wide; and were most wonderfully blessed in winning converts to the faith.—But, as preaching was an ordinance so essential

essential to the welfare of the Church in all ages, by means whereof the elect were to be gathered together, and the fold preserved in soundness and health, the great Shepherd took care, that the commission to preach, should not die with those to whom it was originally dispensed.—A succession of Ministers was established.—The fathers of the Church were directed to beget spiritual sons, to co-operate with them in, and to perpetuate the work of the Lord; and soon, the preachers of the Word, in the different subordinations of the Ministry, were greatly multiplied over the face of the earth.—So gracious was the Almighty to this favoured land, that in the very first century, the sound of the everlasting Gospel was heard, from one end thereof, even unto the other; and in every age since, the ministerial succession has continued, announcing, with a greater or a lesser degree of light, glad tidings of salvation to fallen man.—And though I do not say it is not the duty of private Lay-Christians to instruct each other in spiritual things, for under certain circumstances, it is admitted to be as much their province, as ours; yet certainly they have not that positive general commission to it, which we have; and therefore some persons,

persons, who are too forward in this business, ought seriously to consider, whether they are not presumptuous, and running before they are sent.—At the same time, those who follow, and countenance such uncommissioned teachers, and thereby are led too often to neglect the ministrations of their lawful Pastors, ought very attentively to consider, whether they do as becometh Christians, and especially Christians of the Church of England;—nay, whether they do not condemn the ordinance of Christ.—To “preach the Word” then, is the province of Christ’s Ministers.—It may be, and is the duty of a private Christian, to admonish and instruct his neighbour, when occasion offers; parents should seek occasions to instruct their offspring; sponsors in baptism, their godchildren; and heads of families, their households; but whenever the laity go beyond these limits, and become public preachers of the Word, they appear to me evidently to step out of their line; and to do that, which the best intention cannot justify.—Recollect, that the words of the text were addressed by St. Paul to Timothy, who was a Minister, and a Bishop in the Church.—The Christian clergy being then the only authorized public preachers of the

the Word, we pass on, in the second place, to enquire particularly, *what is the word we are to preach?*

The Scribes and Pharisees of old, were sharply reprov'd by our blessed Lord, because they* “made the commandment of GOD of none effect, by their tradition; and taught for doctrines the commandments of men.”—They introduced in their discourses, and long dwelt upon, the vain fancies and traditions of the Elders: These, they represented, as obligatory upon their hearers; and to neglect them, they urged, was to incur the displeasure of GOD, and thereby endanger their own safety. But what said Christ to these people?—Why, to their face, he calls them *hypocrites*; and plainly declares, that† “in vain do they worship God.”—Hence we argue, that the traditions and fancies of men, however ancient or venerable, wise, or virtuous they may have been, are not to be the ground-work of our preaching.

Nor are we to build upon the fancies of our own brain.—A lively imagination

* Matt. xv. 6—9.

† Matt. xv. 9.

may

may easily form a system of notions, compact and curious in themselves, and which will take with many, to whom they may be proposed.—Thus did the Philosophers of antiquity, and they had crowded Schools, and numerous Auditories.—But the Christian Preacher is not so to employ his talent.—He is neither implicitly to follow the notions of primitive Sages, nor to form new theories of his own.—He is ever to bear in mind, that * “one is his Master, even Christ;” and therefore that it is the “word of God,” and that only, which he is to preach.—The Holy Scriptures are to be the test of all his ministerial exhortations; for † “whatever is not “read therein, nor may be proved there-
 “by, is not to be required of any man,
 “that it should be believed as an article
 “of the faith, or be thought requisite or
 “necessary to salvation.” This sacred treasury of religious knowledge he is to study, and take delight in, that from thence he may be ‡ “apt to teach,” and “able
 “to convince gainsayers.”—The writings of the Old, as well as the New Testament, are to furnish matter for the evan-

* Matt. xxiii. 8.
 of England.

† 6th Art. of the Church
 ‡ 1 Tim. iii. 2.

gelical orator's instructive and admonitory harangues.—* “ Prophecy came not in
 “ old time by the will of man, but holy
 “ men of GOD spake as they were moved
 “ by the Holy Ghost.”—And † “ GOD,
 “ who at sundry times, and in diverse
 “ manners, spake in times past unto the
 “ Fathers, by the Prophets, hath in these
 “ last days spoken unto us by his Son.”—
 The New Testament is the record of that
 Son's sayings, and the sayings of those,
 who were inspired by him to write down
 his unerring truths, for the information
 and consolation of the world.—Therefore,
 ‡ “ to the Law, and to the Testimony; and
 “ if we speak not according to this word,
 “ it is because there is no light in us.”—
 Thus you see, that it is not the inventions
 of man, nor the suggestions of our own
 brain, that we are to preach, but the pure
 unerring illuminating “ word of GOD.”

Our *last* enquiry was, what is it to
 “ preach the Word?”

The Priests and Levites, under the law,
 give us a memorable example for our

* 2 Pet. i. 21.
 viii. 20.

† Heb. i. 1, 2.

‡ Isa.

imitation * : “ They read in the book, in
 “ the law of God distinctly, and gave
 “ the sense, and caused the people to
 “ understand the reading.”—In like man-
 ner, our preaching ought to explain, un-
 fold, and illustrate the great truths of
 Scripture, both doctrinal, and practical.
 —As Ministers of Christ, we are particu-
 larly to shew the grounds on which the
 world stands in need of a Saviour: We
 are to point out that Saviour; and shew
 by what prefigurations he was alluded to,
 and by what prophecies he was spoken of,
 in the imperfect dispensation of Moses;
 and we are to exhibit the evidences on
 which we assert that *Jesus* was he, in
 whom every characteristic of the Messiah
 concentered.—We are freely to offer sal-
 vation through him, and minutely repre-
 sent the terms whereon it is attainable.—
 We are to shew the necessity of *repentance*;
 the all-gracious promises annexed to *faith*;
 and we are to take special care, in defin-
 ing what faith is.—We are to declare,
 that “ † faith without works is dead,” and
 therefore that the faith to which the pro-
 mises are annexed, is that which “ ‡ work-

* Neh. viii. 8.
 v. 6.

† James ii. 15.

‡ Gal.

“ eth

“eth by love,” — which produceth a sincere universal obedience to all God’s commands.—These commands, likewise, we are to particularize, and enlarge upon, and enforce, by every persuasive argument our imaginations can suggest.—We are not only to assert the privileges and the promises of the Gospel, but also the various duties, to which the Gospel, by every possible sanction and motive, obliges us.—And we are to shew the necessity of *Divine Grace*, to enable us to walk in the ways of duty; which grace we are to represent as attainable, in the use of the appointed means, particularly by prayer and supplication to Almighty God.

Another business of preaching is to reprehend those, who are careless of their spiritual concerns, and wallowing in the mire of sin and sensuality.—The Prophet Isaiah says *, “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgressions, and the house of Israel their sins.”—And in another Prophet, we read these words †; “I have made you a watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore when I say

* Isa. lviii. 1.

† Ezek. xxxiii. 7, 8.

“unto

“ unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die,
 “ and thou givest him not warning, the
 “ same wicked man shall die in his ini-
 “ quities, but his blood will I require at
 “ thy hand.”—I do not mean, that we
 are, at all times, to speak directly to par-
 ticular persons, and openly reprove them
 for their sins, before a multitude—That
 would rarely answer a good end.—But I
 mean that we are to delineate the sinner,
 and his various iniquities, so that, if pre-
 sent, he may at least tacitly own, “ I am
 “ the man:” And then we are to an-
 nounce * “ the terrors of the Lord,” and
 declare, with all boldness and freedom,
 that “ † indignation and wrath, tribulation
 “ and anguish,” will inevitably be the
 portion of every one “ that doeth evil,”
 and repenteth *not*.

Such, in brief, are the general duties of
 the Preacher of God’s holy Word; and
 to fulfil them, is faithfully to comply with
 the injunction of the text.

Now, my Brethren, from what has been
 said, I may fairly deduce the following
 useful inferences:

* Ps. lxxxviii. 15.

† Rom. ii. 8, 9.

1st,

1st, We of the Clergy have authority, and are divinely commanded to “preach the Word.”—When our Blessed Lord sent forth his Disciples to * “teach all nations,” he concluded, by saying, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”—But as those individual persons, to whom he addressed himself, died like other men; he must mean, he would be with them and their appointed successors; and consequently, the command to teach, must be as extensive as the consolatory promise.—We have therefore particular authority from Christ to speak to you, in his name, of the things relating to the kingdom of God: † “necessity is laid upon me, yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel.”

2dly, If such be our authority and commission, you cannot, at least you ought not to blame us, for telling you of your duty.—To preach the mercies and forgivenesses of the Gospel, is by far the most pleasant part of our office. Whenever therefore from such declaratory preaching, we go on to ‡ “reprove, re-

* Matt. xxviii. 20.

† 1 Cor. ix. 16.

‡ 2 Tim. iv. 2.

buke, and exhort, with all “long-suffering,” we do that which hurts our feelings, though it satisfies the conscience.—And you ought always to take * “the faithful wounds of a friend” in good part.—Indeed, I prepossess my mind with better hopes of you, than to suppose that what I at any time honestly mean for your spiritual benefit, will be taken otherwise than I wish it should be.—My fervent prayer to God for you is, and will continue to be, that the word spoken from my mouth may be highly acceptable to you all; that, through the divine blessing, it may take root in your hearts, and bring forth fruit abundantly, to the praise and glory of God.

But, 3dly, You are not only patiently to hear what we preach, but also *to obey*.—When a Minister of Christ is faithfully preaching the Word, he is not to be attended to as a mere man speaking, but as one authoritatively delivering a message from Heaven; and those before whom he ministers, will one day be called to account for every well-intended scriptural Sermon, from which they did not profit.

* Prov. xxvii. 6.

See

See then, my Brethren, that you frequent the Sanctuary with prepared hearts, and a desire to become “ * wise unto salvation.”—See that you reflect seriously upon what you hear, and do your utmost endeavour to reduce it to practice; remembering, that “ † not the hearers of “ the Word, but the doers thereof, are “ justified ” in G O D ’ s sight.—Then, when I observe you walking in all the ordinances and commandments of the LORD blameless, “ ‡ I shall see of the “ travail of my soul, and be satisfied.”

Let us now conclude, in a devout Collect of our Church——“ § Make, we beseech thee, O God, all Bishops and Pastors diligently to preach thy holy word, “ and the people obediently to follow the “ same, that they may receive the crown of “ everlasting glory, through Jesus Christ “ our Lord.”—Amen.

* 2 Tim. iii. 15.
iii. 11.

† Rom. ii. 13.

‡ Isa.

§ Collect for St. Peter's Day.



F I N I S.

